Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) An authentication method comprising the steps of:

a. tagging an item by randomly distributing a taggant in at least part of the item, the taggant being invisible to an unaided human eye under normal conditions;

b. optically detecting the random distribution of said taggant ~~by~~ by:

i. placing a detector in proximity to the ~~item~~ item; and

ii. generating data related to the taggant distribution; and

c. verifying whether the data matches previous data from previously detected items.

2. (original) A method as in claim 1 wherein the item is printed with a liquid, the liquid comprising printing ink and taggant.

3. (original) A method as in claim 1 wherein the item includes a registration feature detectable by the detector.

4. (original) A method as in claim 1 wherein the verifying step is invariant to the exact placement of the detector relative to the item.

5. (original) A method as in claim 1 wherein the verifying step is tolerant to errors.

6. (original) A method as in claim 1 wherein the verifying step comprises storing at least part of the previous data from previously detected items in RAM.

7.	(original) An authentication system for authenticating an item, the authentication system comprising:

a. a taggant mixed with a material, at least a part of the item comprising the material;

b. a detector capable of detecting location of the taggant without being required to contact the taggant;

c. a database for storing taggant locations from one or more items; and

d. a verification unit for checking whether the item matches any of the one or more items in the database.

8.	(currently amended) An authentication method comprising the steps of:

a. tagging an item by randomly distributing a taggant in at least part of the item;

b. detecting the taggant ~~by~~ by:

  i. placing a detector in proximity to the ~~item~~ item; and

  ii. generating first data related to the taggant distribution;

c. marking the item with a code related to the first data; and

d. ~~verifying~~ verifying the item at a future time ~~by~~ by:

  i. placing a detector in proximity to the ~~item,~~ item;

  ii. generating second data related to the taggant ~~distribution~~ distribution; and

  iii. comparing the second data to the marked code.

9.	(currently amended) A detector for detecting invisible taggant in an item, the detector comprising of:

a. an electronic camera capable of forming an image of a taggant distribution in the item;

b. means of making the taggant detectable to the camera; and

c. image processing means capable ~~of~~ of:

    i. detecting a registration mark on the ~~item~~ item; and

    ii. registering the taggant distribution to the registration mark.

10.   (previously presented) The authentication system of claim 7 wherein said detector is capable of optically detecting the random distribution of said taggant in said item, and said verification unit is capable of checking whether said item matches any of one or more items in the database from said optical detection of said random distribution.

11.   (previously presented) The authentication method of claim 8 wherein the generating of first and second data is achieved by optically detecting said random distribution of said taggant.